them the Government propose to introduce a Shatabdi train on the Firozpur-Faridkot-Kotkapura-Bhatinda-Delhi route; and

(c) if so, the time by which a final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Punjab Mail and Janata Express provide fast service on the said route, besides one pair of passenger service.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Marathi Channel on Doordarshan

2044. SHRI MOHAN RAWALE : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to refer to reply given to Unstarred Question No.5477 dated September 12, 1996 regarding starting of Marathi channel on Doordarshan and State:

(a) the progess made so far in this regard;

(b) whether the Government of Maharashtra have also approached the Union Government to allot around one hour's time for Marathi in the morning telecast and during the Prime Time telecast on Doordarshan channel-I;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the reaction of the Union Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) There is no change in the position.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Maharashtra vide his letter dated the 19th August,1996 has requested that Prime Time between 7.00 p.m. and 8.30 p.m should be exclusively earmarked for 'Mai Marathi'.

(d) Does not arise, as the time slot between 4.30 to 8.30 PM (Monday to Friday) and 4.30 to 7.30 PM on Sunday on DD-I is already dedicated to regional programmes in Marathi.

Basic Telecom Services

2045. PROF. P.J. KURIEN :
SHRI ANNASAHIB M.K. PATIL :
DR. LAXMINARAYANA PANDEY :
SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that not a single licence has been issued to any one for basic telecom services;

(b) whether no company has accepted the letter of intent so far;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) action being taken in this regard; and

(e) the penalty imposed on the companies for the delay in executing the agreement?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (e). Out of the seven Letter of Intent holding companies, five of them have accepted the letter of intent for their respective allocated Service Area and the cases relating to the remaining two companies are subjudice in the High Court of Delhi.

Alongwith the Letter of Acceptance, the companies have raised certain issues pertaining to Licence and Interconnect agreements, viz. Assignability of Licence, Interconnect charges, Advance deposit against bills, External Commercial borrowings Force Majeure, Arbitration provisions etc. and these are still being reviewed by the Government.

Non-Functioning of Telephones

2046. COL. RAO RAM SINGH : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have received complaints of non-functioning of telephones provided to gram panchayats of Mahender Garh, Rewari and Gurgaon Districts of Haryana;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the time by which these telephones are likely to be make functional; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government to provide telephones to such Gram Panchayats of the above districts where there are no telephone?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) About 15% Village Public Telephones are reported faulty in Mahendergarh, Rewari and Gurgaon Districts.

(c) These faulty telephones are likely to be made functional by end of January 1997.

(d) Of 531 left over villages in these three districts, 320 are planned to be provided with Village Public Telephones during 1996-97. The remaining 211 villages are likely to be covered during 1997-98.

Villages Connected with Telephone Connections

2047. SHRI B.L. SHANKAR : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of villages connected with/without telephone facilities in the country, State-wise;